fact, the pilots can do four landings a day. Is this the way to bring economy and effeciency and enhance productivity? When the Airlines is losing crores of rupees, we have to take care of that point also. We are buying equipments, but after their installation, we find that they become non-operational. Sir, I will give you a classic example.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, is it a Short Duration Discussion on Civil Aviation Ministry or a Question Hour?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kindly ask your specific questions. As a matter of fact, because of long questions and their wherewithals, we are not able to complete even a few questions.

DR. B.B. DUTTA: All right. Sir, I would like to know why after purchasing the precision radar landing system and after its installation it has remained out of operation for six long months at Srinagar Airport. I do not know whether it has now become operational or not, but, I would specifically like to know whether such instances are also there in other airports. That is they have bought the equipment, installed them and then they are not operational.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: First of all, I would like to say that this question is not related to the main question. But, I really compliment the bravery of the part of the hon. Member for objectively criticising the legacy about the vision and performance inherited in the Civil Aviation Ministry during the last few years. But, Sir, this state of affairs has not been found during the last one year.

Sir, we are recarpeting the Srinagar Airport. Therefore, we had changed our operation from Srinagar to Avantipur. The I.L.S. category one is functioning there. Sir, in a record time we have made it operational there.

Linkage by Internet Service Providers

*284. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have allowed Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to provide last mile linkage to the subscribers' premises;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether under the conditions of basic telecom licences this right was reserved for DoT/MTNL and one private operator in each circle?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are allowed to provide last mile linkage to the subscriber premises for internet services either by installation of fibre optic/ radio communication or leasing out the same from the basic service providers. This has been done with a view to:

(i) reducing the time of provisioning.

(ii) improving the reliability.

(c) No Sir. The scope of fixed telephone service to be provided by basic service providers covers switched telephony/transmission of voice or non-voice messages inclusive of Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) facilities over their Public Switched Telecom Network (PSTN) in real time only.

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Sir, this is a very serious matter. The question arises out of the charge made by the private sector telecom industry operators. They are saying that the Government has violated the conditions orginally agreed upon. They say that they are not in a position to pay the licence fee. According to reports the arrear of licence fee is about Rs. 3,700 crores. They say they have made a blunder by bidding a huge licence fee and they must be forgiven now. They have now put up a defence saying that they are not in a position to pay that amount, because the Government has violated the condition.

Sir, part (c) of the question is very clear. According to them, under the conditions of the basic telecom licence this right was reserved for DoT/MTNL and one operator in each circle. The question is that these operators are doing a very good business and are selling their equity shares at a premium. But, in order to defraud the Government—Sir, I am using a bit harsh word—they want to cheat the Government. Sir, you know we, as Members of Parliament as well as subscribers throughout India, are paying inflated bills through our nose. They are saying that they are in arrears to the tune of Rs. 3,700 crores. I would like to know the exact amount that is due from these private operators. It is a classic example of the management! What is the exact amount that is due? And, according to this agreement which is for 15 years, what would be the amount of licence fee the Government is going to get throughout this 15-year time? Please let me know that.

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, there are two sets of licences; one is for the Internet Services and the other is for Basic Services. These are two separate conditions. They are two separate licences. All terms and conditions are separate. So, what the Government is doing is, it is enforcing the terms and conditions as they have signed. I can assure the House that they will not be allowed to cheat. Already, we are on the job. We are pressing them. Some of them have gone to the court and lodged a case. We have, during the last few days, recovered more than Rs. 200 crores and we will recover the amount, as I have said. This plea that the Internet Services have been allowed to come into the field is totally untenable because they are different types of licences. The Internet is meant for data transmission whereas the Basic Service is meant for voice transmission. They may be trying to confuse somebody else, but the Government is not going to be confused

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: What is the amount due?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: The amount due, today, is about Rs. 4000 crores from three sets of persons. There are the Cellulars who are operating in the four metropolitan cities; there are Telecom Circles operators (Cellular) and then, there are Basic Services in six Telecom Circles. So, there are three sets of cases. The total amount due is about Rs. 4000 crores today because we have recovered some money. In the month of March, some more amount have become due. Therefore, the figure has come up. That is there.

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Sir, I must compliment the Minister. Even outside Parliament, he was very firm and he has stated that they would be taking action. But it is reported that there is pressure from the PMO officials..:

MR. CHAIRMAN: You put the question.

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Yes, I am putting the question, Sir. I am not scared of the word 'PMO'.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is not a question of PMO. It concerns only the Telecom.

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Sir, the question is that we are told that the PMO officials are pressurising the DoT and also your Ministry people to review the matter and also to come up with some solution in order to help them. Now, the question is very pertinent, whether we are going to succumb to the pressure exerted by these people. As I have stated already, we have got an illusion that the private sector is managing very well and a lot of money is being made. All of a sudden, all these things are happening. All the people are admiring the private sector. This is the classic example I have stated. Now, would you assure the House that you are not going to succumb to the pressure of the PMO?

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, there is no pressure. The terms and conditions of licence are there. I have already said that these terms and conditions will be enforced.

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, there is a great interest and curiosity among Members of Parliament about the Internet as a provider of information and knowledge. But they are facing difficulties. A lot of time has to be spent with the computer. Once our telephone is connected, our outgoing calls and incoming calls are blocked. Therefore, one telephone connection should be provided to Members of Parliament for this. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister will provide that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does it arise out of this question?

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: Then, whether the....

MR. CHAIRMAN: This does not arise out of the question.

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: What is happening is, there are delays in the Internet. The information flow is very slow in our country. It is flowing at the rate of 64 kilo bytes per second whereas the world is having 3 maga bytes flow of information. This is also causing a great delay. Actually, there is a great curiosity about the Internet and people want to know more about everything and that is not possible. So, I would like to know whether the Minister will provide the modern facilities which are available with the Internet. This is one question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all right.

DR. GOPALRAO VITHALRAO PATIL: One connection should be given to Members of Parliament.

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, as the demand increases, there is always some congestion. But to obviate that congestion, we are continuously upgrading the system. Therefore, there is no real congestion. But, if any particular facility is required, we will be very happy to provide that subject to the terms and conditions of licence. And, I can say that 83 licences have been issued to the Internet Service Providers. The VSNL, the MTNL, are also making this service available. I can read out the statistics I have with me. At present, we have about 1,83,000 service subscribers of Internet from the VSNL; about 300 in Bombay and 2000 in Delhi from the MTNL; and from the DoT directly, 35,000; from private operators, 10,000. Therefore, this number is sufficient. And we are prepared to increase it. We have already given more licences. It is now for them to set up the Intenet Services be cause 83 licences have been given.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Nilo tpal Basu. *(Interruptions)*. No. No. Mr. Nilotpal Basu. *(Interruptions)*. No, no. Nothing. Please sit down. Mr. Nilotpal Basu.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as has been pointed out, there is a dispute between the Basic Service licensees in the private sector and the Government. It has also been pointed out that the last-mile-linkage provision is being used as an excuse by the new licensees to sort of carry on the dispute with the Government and not to pay the due licence fee to the Government. Now, the TRAI is taking a patently pro-private-licensee position in this entire dispute. And the Government have also complicated the whole issue in the sense that the Group of Telecom has come out with a draft paper on the New Telecom Policy which raises the hopes of these private licensees to carry on this dispute. So, my specific questions are:—

(a) whether the Government will first clear the mess that has been created about the fulfilment of the conditionalities that were part of the contract with the basic licensees and then go for clearing out the TRAI position in terms of amendments in the TRAI Act; and

(b) whether the New Telecom Policy will be withheld till this whole mess in the basic services sector, the disputes, are cleared.

SHRI JAGMOHAN: Sir, I have made the position clear, so far as the Government is concerned, that we will enforce the terms and conditions of licence. These terms and conditions of licence have been signed before. Therefore, any new policy that will come will not apply retrospectively. Obviously, when the new policy, if any, is framed, a decision will be taken. The legal and constitutional requirements will be looked into; the other requirements, like financial requirements, will also be looked into. These people have been given these licences on the basis of open competitive bids. So, they will have to honour those bids. They have voluntarily signed them. As far as your suggestion about excuses is concerned, I can assure you, no excuse will be allowed to prevail.

About the Telecom Regulatory Authority, as I have said, we will enforce the terms and conditions of the licence and if there is any hurdle from any quarter, we will meet it.

*285. *[The Questions (Sardar Balwinder Singh Bhundar) was absent. For answer vide col. 31 infra.]*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 286.

Setting up of Public Sector Restructuring Authority

*286. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Standing conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) has recommended setting up of an independent agency, the Public Sector Restructuring Authority, for restructuring the sick public sector enterprises; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House. (a) and (b) Centre for Industrial and Economic Research (CIER), commissioned by Standing conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) have conducted a study on "Strategies for Action on Sick Central Public Enterprises". The report suggests that a Public Sector Restructuring Authority/Agency (PSRA) may be established with the following broad functions:

Develop guidelines for monitoring incipient sickness;

Provide advice and assistance to sick enterprises;

Sponsor and deal with cases before BIFR;

Organise liquidation proceedings, where necessary;

Organise strategic sale of management of undertakings; and

Organise sale of assets, where necessary.

Suggestion as contained in the report has been noted.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, the vital question is whether the Central Government will take effective steps to evaluate the role of the sick public sector, so-called sick public sector, and take up a programme for revival on the basis of merit or whether they will, as a matter of policy, decide to close down the public sector units which they consider to be sick.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, a continuous review of the performance of the public sector and its financial health goes on in Government, and in the last

The Question was actually asked on the Floor of the House by Shri Gurudas Das Gupta.